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The Great Passing of the Buddha and Māra*

Isao KURITA

Abstract
This paper deals with a fragment from a panel of the scene of the Buddha's death, depicting Māra's delight on hearing of his demise.

Keywords
Māra, Death of Buddha, Gandhara relief

The Buddhist scripture (the *Divyāvadāna*) narrates "Māra was in great joy, satisfaction and rapture because the time for the Buddha's Great Death had come and his wishes had been met, so he departed" (*atha mārasya pāpīyasa etad abhavat*, *parinirvāsyate vata śramaṇo gautama iti viditvā hṛṣṭas tuṣṭaḥ pramudita udagraḥ prītisaumanasyajātaḥ tatraivāntarhitaḥ /, Divyāvadāna*. *A Collection of Early Buddhist Legends*, ed. by E. B. Cowell, and R. A. Neil, Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1886, p. 203, 25–27).

According to Alfred Foucher, Grünwedel searched for Māra in the Great Decease scene in Gandhara because of this episode, but he mistook Vajrapāṇi's facial expression of great sorrow for rapture and tried to identify this figure as Māra.

The panels of the Buddha's death, in which Māra appears, are very few though several panels do exist. In fig. 1, we see Māra and his daughter on the left. Fig. 2, which was published once before in Kurita 2012 (fig. 14 [PLATE 64], "Gandhāran Art," in: *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University*, vol. XVI, pp. 337–341, esp. p. 339), depicts Māra and his daughter very clearly in the right-hand corner.

Fig. 3 is a rather large fragment (50cm×44cm) of a remarkable panel, depicting this episode. Under the bed of the dying Buddha, Māra is overcome with rapture. Above him, one female (without a head), probably one of Māra's daughters, is also falling down (in rapture?). On one side, Ānanda is crying in sorrow as we see in normal panels of the death of the Buddha. At the end of this particular panel, on the left, another female (also without a head) is standing, I assume that Māra's third daughter is somewhere to the right of the bed as he appears always with one of his daughters or all three of them.

It is regrettable that we cannot show this interesting relief to either Grünwedel or Foucher.

By the way, we can see one female on the extreme right in fig. 4 (Kolkata Museum).

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* The reviewer kindly points out that, according to the *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta*, *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* and *Divyāvadāna*, the dialogue between the Buddha and Māra concerning the *mahāparinirvāṇa* took place not in Kuśinagara but in Vaiśālī; also these texts do not mention that Māra was accompanied by his daughter(s).

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Foucher identified her as one of the Māras as they came to see the death of Buddha in family groups. However, I think she is Māra's daughter as Māra, who is to her left, is leaning on her shoulder with his left elbow. This pose is always the same in scenes in which Māra and his daughters are depicted.

Please see their typical pose in fig. 5 (and also figs. 211, 212, 214–219, 221, 222 in *Gandhāran Art* I, ed. by I. Kurita, 2003, Tokyo: Nigensha).

Fig. 1. Gray schist, h.14cm, Private collection, Japan.

Fig. 2. Gray schist, 69 × 62cm, Shinnyo-en Museum, Japan.

PLATE 8

Fig. 3. Gray schist, 50 × 44cm, Private collection, China.

Fig. 4. Gray schist, h.41cm, From Loryan-Tangai, Calcutta Museum.

Fig. 5. Gray schist, h.42cm, Private collection, Europe.